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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0011  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0160  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0007  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 0018  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 0046  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0009  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0002  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0163  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0018  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000188

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [WGG](#) [AL](#) [XR](#) [UY](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: LONG-WINDED CHAVEZ EXPECTED AT MARCH 31 ARAB-SOUTH  
AMERICAN SUMMIT IN DOHA

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- On March 31, 2009, Qatar will host the Second Arab-South America Summit. The Summit will immediately follow the Arab League Summit to be held in Doha March 29-30.

-- MFA Assistant Minister Al-Rumaihi told DCM March 17 that eight Latin American heads of state would attend, including anti-U.S. figures from Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

-- The balance of states would be represented by Foreign Ministers (except perhaps Uruguay).

-- While Al-Rumaihi said the primary focus of the event would be economic, he acknowledged that Chavez and other leaders would inevitably use the Summit as a platform for political statements.

-- South America, he said, had ample agricultural supplies that could be traded against the energy exports of Arab states.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- We fully expect the March 31 Summit, given the cast of characters attending, to produce anti-U.S. (or, at least, anti-Israel) rhetoric.

-- While we will continue to seek a copy of the agenda and the draft Summit statement, we doubt the Qataris will provide these documents in advance of the Summit.

-- Al-Rumaihi, the #3 MFA official, shrugged his shoulders at the mention of Chavez as if to say the rhetoric against the U.S., even if symbolic, cannot be avoided.

End Key Points and Comments

¶1. (SBU) On March 31, Qatar will host in Doha the Second Arab-South American Summit. The timing of the Summit aims to take advantage of the presence in Doha of Arab League heads of state, who will be meeting here March 29-30. MFA Assistant Minister for Follow-Up Affairs Mohamed Al-Rumaihi told DCM Ratney and P/E Chief Rice March 17 that eight South American heads of state had confirmed their attendance. Included on the list are heads of state critical of the U.S. from Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

¶2. (C) DCM responded that the press will undoubtedly focus on Hugo Chavez' statements and, in particular, anything he and other leaders said about the Palestinian conflict, Gaza, and other political issues. Al-Rumaihi acknowledged that Chavez would have a spotlight.

¶3. (C) MFA Director of American and European Affairs Adel Al-Khal, who was also present for the meeting, cited Chavez' 30-minute speech (instead of the five-minute address on which the Saudi organizers had insisted) at an OPEC luncheon in Saudi Arabia last year as an example of how difficult it is to control Chavez.

¶4. (C) Al-Rumaihi said the goal of the meetings is to reinforce the economic relationship between the Arab and South American countries. He indicated that agriculture is a sector of great interest to the Arabs in dealing with South America. "They need energy; we need food," he said.

¶5. (C) The Assistant Minister observed that the U.S. has

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"lost ground" in Latin America, with Brazil now playing an increasingly large hemispheric role. Al-Rumaihi, who along with MFA point person for North America Ali Al Thani, personally delivered invitations to the Summit to South American Foreign Ministers, believed that of the South American countries, Colombia and Chile are the most reliable U.S. partners.

¶6. (C) In a separate March 16 meeting, Al Thani told P/E Chief Rice and PolOff Caudill that the GOQ is pressuring Uruguay (which recently opened an Embassy in Qatar) to raise the profile of its delegation to the Summit. Without offering specifics, Al Thani said every South American country would be represented in Doha at the head of state or foreign minister level -- except Uruguay. Uruguay seeks to send only an Undersecretary.

¶7. (C) Al Thani said the agenda for the Arab-South American Summit had not been finalized. It continues to circulate among the Arab heads of state, who must approve it. Al Thani did provide a web site ([www2.mre.gov.br/aspa](http://www2.mre.gov.br/aspa)) where information on the Summit will be posted.

¶8. (U) The first Arab-South America Summit was held in Brasilia in 2005, and a framework agreement on economic cooperation between the GCC and Mercosur was signed there. Since that time, there have been several high level meetings to continue the dialogue established at that conference. The most notable of these was a meeting of Arab and South American Foreign Ministers held in Buenos Aires in February, 2008 which resulted in the Buenos Aires Declaration. That statement of common principles touched a wide range of issues, including support for the withdrawal of Israel to the lines of 4 June 1967.

LeBaron